

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Western District of New York

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PRESS RELEASE

May 27, 2005

RE: UNITED STATES v. PAUL D. SKINNER

United States Attorney Michael A. Battle announced today that former Buffalo Police Narcotics Detective Paul D. Skinner, age 46, was sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 93 months and three years supervised release by the Honorable Richard J. Arcara, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Western District of New York.

In December of 2004, following a three-week jury trial, Skinner was convicted of three counts of the Indictment against him; that Indictment also charged former Buffalo Police Department Narcotics Detectives Sylvestre Acosta as well as Paul Skinner's brother, Gerald Skinner, with various civil rights and firearms crimes. Specifically, the jury convicted Paul Skinner of: one misdemeanor count of deprivation of civil rights under color of law, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 242; one count of conspiracy to violate civil rights, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 241; and one count of using and carrying a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence,

in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c). The civil rights conspiracy conviction under Title 18, United States Code, Section 241 carried a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000.00, or both. Under the gun conviction, defendant faced a mandatory consecutive term of imprisonment of 5 years for such conviction. Finally, the misdemeanor conviction carried a maximum penalty of 1 year imprisonment, a fine of \$100,000.00, or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney J.P. Kennedy, who handled the case, stated that at trial, several of the victims of the civil rights violations alleged in the indictment as well as numerous present and former members of the Buffalo Police Department testified. Through the course of the trial, the government presented evidence which indicated that defendant, together with his co-defendant at trial, Sylvestre Acosta, as well as former Buffalo Police Department Detectives Gerald Skinner, Rene Gil, and Robert Hill, conspired and agreed to violate the civil rights of drug suspects by, among other things, falsifying information used to obtain search warrants, planting evidence, as well as stealing money and personal property from persons they encountered during the course of their duties as police officers.

Earlier this month, Judge Arcara sentenced co-defendant Acosta to a term of imprisonment of 45 years plus one day in jail. Acosta, who was charged in two more gun counts that Paul Skinner, received an additional 20 years consecutive imprisonment on each of those charges. Co-defendant Gerald Skinner who pled guilty prior to trial to a civil rights conspiracy charge, was sentenced by Judge Arcara, in September of 2004, to 30 months incarceration.

United States Attorney Battle observed that the protection of civil rights is a national priority for the United States Department of Justice and that this prosecution shows that his Office will insist upon honesty and integrity in each and every law enforcement official serving our community.

The conviction and sentencing was the culmination of an investigation on the part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Peter J. Ahearn, Special Agent in Charge; the New York State Police, Special Investigations Unit, under the direction of Major Frank H. Koehler; and the Internal Revenue Service, under the direction of Anne Marie Coons, Special Agent in Charge. United States Attorney Battle also stated that the Buffalo Police Department, under the direction Rocco J. Diina, Commissioner, cooperated completely with the investigation.

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